

# The Effects of the Aging Process



# Objectives

- Physical, behavioral and emotional changes associated with aging
- Understand age-related versus disease-related changes
- Diseases that may occur
- Healthy aging
- Red Flags – changes in an older relative that may require assistance from family member and professionals



# Aging = Changes

***True or False: Chronological age is the most important determinant of age.***

- Aging is an inevitable stage of life
- Aging is a gradual, highly individual process and the effects of aging differs widely
- The challenge for older adults is accepting and adjusting to changes
- Disease and aging are two different things – the symptoms of disease should not be confused with aging.



# Common Physiological Changes

***True or False: Older people need less sleep.***

Physiological Changes:

- Change in appearance: skin, hair and nails
- Reduced ability to perspire
- Reduced blood flow
- Shortness of breath and fatigue
- Decreased ability to take in oxygen
- Some loss of muscle tone and strength
- Constipation and bladder incontinence



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# Common Physiological Changes (con't)

## Physiological Changes:

- Bone density reduction
- Arthritis
- Slower reflexes
- Change in sleep patterns
- Produce less hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, and saliva
- More susceptible to drug toxicity
- In spite of physical loss and difficulties, most older people adjust quite well and are able to compensate for their losses.



# Common Sensory Changes

***True or false: An older person who has a hearing problem will know it.***

- Our senses play a key role in our ability to gather information and participate in social interactions
- Many older persons accept sensory deficits as an “inevitable” part of aging. Treatment or sensory aides could restore quality of life, sense of independence and participation in relationships and activities



# Common Sensory Changes (con't)

- Common sensory changes:
  - Vision
  - Hearing
  - Taste and smell
  - Skin sensitivity
- Older persons and their caregivers should be encouraged to check for and address sensory deficits



# Cognitive Changes

***True or false: Memory loss is part of the aging process.***

- Brain size decreases, but for most, intelligence remains constant
- Older individuals are capable of learning new skills but it may take more time and practice
- Many things other than aging can cause memory problems – including stress, depression, dementia (severe problems with memory and thinking, such as Alzheimer's disease), side effects of drugs, strokes, head injury and alcoholism



# Diseases and Health Challenges

***True or false: Poor health in later life is inevitable.***

- Cancer
- Kidney and Bladder Problems
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Blood vessel disease
- Lung disease
- Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia
- Depression
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Adult onset diabetes
- Prostate disease
- Parkinson's disease



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# Emotional and Behavioral Changes

**True or False: Personality changes as people age.**

Changes and Stress:

- Aging is a process of adjusting to continual changes including:
  - Health changes
  - Sensory changes including vision, hearing and other senses
  - Mobility restrictions
  - Memory
  - Relocation or housing changes



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# Emotional and Behavioral Changes (con't)

- Aging is a process of adjusting to continual changes including:
  - Caregiving for spouse or another person
  - Retirement
  - Death of spouse, friends other family members
  - Income
  - Reliance on others
- When stressors multiply, people are more vulnerable to mental health problems



# Attitude and Successful Aging

- Successful aging depends on an older adult's attitude and ability to compensate for changes
- Healthy lifestyle
- Productivity and employment
- Having a passion/strong interest
- Coping well and having an optimistic outlook
- Staying involved in activities and social engagement



# Red Flags

- Unjustified fear
- Multiple complaints
- Unreasonable excuses
- Burdensome guilt/shame
- Unwarranted suspicion
- Inability to concentrate
- Unwillingness to talk
- Neglect of self-care
- Tearfulness
- Neglect of duties
- Agitation or irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness



# Red Flags (con't)

- Unexplained injuries
- Stopping usual routines
- Refusal to have visitors
- Mood swings
- Multiple medications
- Recent losses
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Loss of hearing or vision
- Loss of bladder control
- Chronic pain
- Change in appetite
- Memory impairment



# WorkLife4You Resources

WorkLife4You web site [www.WorkLife4You.com](http://www.WorkLife4You.com)

- **Adult Care & Aging Web Service**
  - Caregiving Issues Library
- **Audio Tips and Podcasts**  
Adult Care Overview, The Sandwich Generation, Caregiving Elderly Parents
- **Video Tips**  
Cognitive Test for Alzheimer's Disease, Diagnosing Alzheimer's Disease
- **Medical Animations**  
Alzheimer's Disease
- **HTML Articles**
- **Related Web Sites**
- **On Demand Webinars**  
Adult Care Overview, Caring Financially for Your Older Parents, Caring for a Loved One with Alzheimer's Disease, Caring for Adult Loved Ones: Legal/Financial Issues, Communicating with Your Older Loved One, The Sandwich Generation
- **WorkLife4You Guides**  
Health Care, Legal and Financial Issues for Caregivers; Home Safety for Adult Loved Ones; Encouraging Healthy Habits in Adult Loved Ones; Senior Services; Emergency Preparedness for Caregivers; What You Need to Know About Becoming a Caregiver; Day-to-Day Caregiving; Caring for a Loved One from Afar



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